

Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, May 1, 1996

Daughter of Noted Lighthouse Author on Bug Light Board



Snow family and Flying Santa plane.

Dolly (Snow) Bicknell, daughter of Edward Rowe Snow, is taking an active part in preserving Bug Light.

Dolly is a major contributor, involved in Board decisions and co-chairman of the Project Bug Light's 125th Anniversary party to take place on Saturday, June 22 at the David and Becky Wells home in Duxbury.

Dolly's father is the author of *Famous New England Lighthouses* published in 1945, as well as 95 other seafaring publications. Here is what Mr. Snow says about Bug Light officially known as Duxbury Pier Light in his book:

Duxbury Pier

The brown tower at Duxbury Pier in Plymouth Harbor, erected in 1871, is locally known as Bug Light. The fixed 870 candlepower red light is 35 feet above high tide. Duxbury Pier is located on the north side of the main channel which leads to Duxbury, Kingston, and Plymouth.

Without question Keeper Fred Bohm's record as a life saver here is an outstanding thirty-six Girl Scouts. Two typical rescues took place in 1931 and 1935. On September 14, 1931, he rescued two persons from a small boat which became disabled near the light station in the evening. One of the men had to be given first aid treatment. Keeper Bohm, aided by his assistant George Bell, on May 27, 1935, rescued two men from a small boat, full of water, which was drifting by the light.

Keeper Bohm's most unusual rescue came at supertime one night when the wind was blowing a fifty-mile gale. Hearing terrified screams, he ran out on deck and saw a woman trying to swim toward the light from an overturned boat.

"I launched my boat and rowed toward her," Bohm told me later, "but before I could reach her she had gone down, caught in the devil-tail sea weed the place was full of. I threw off my clothes and jumped over after her. I swam and then waded into shallow water with her unconscious in my arms. Getting her up into the lighthouse, I noticed that her bathing suit was gone. She was in bad shape, and did not respond to first aid. I worked on her for four hours. Finally her eyes began to pen, and she gained consciousness."

"Where are my clothes?" were her first words.

"I don't know, but you are lucky to be alive," was Keeper Bohm's reply to the girl whose life he had saved. By midnight the girl was safe ashore, wearing borrowed clothing.

Dolly recounts some of her exciting experiences flying with her father, dropping Christmas gifts to lighthouse keepers all over New England. Mr. Snow was also known as "New England's flying Santa."

By DOLLY (SNOW) BICKNELL

My father, Edward Rowe Snow, was an author, lecturer, historian and, for over 40 years, New England's Flying Santa. Continuing a tradition begun in 1927, he flew over lonely lighthouses at Christmas time and dropped packages from a plane for the keepers and their families. Inside the bundles he had packed pens, pencils, balloons, candy and lollipops, Gillette razor blades, gum, sunglasses, paperback books, a doll or other toy if he knew that there were children at the lighthouse, and a copy of his latest book. A self-addressed stamped post card was also included. "We have received your package. (Subject) Lighthouse," it read. The postcards that were

returned enabled him to claim a 92% rate of success in his 44 years of flying. A record of which he was very proud. All these items were wrapped in newspaper, and then excelsior (a hay-like material) for padding and buoyancy in case of a less than direct hit, and finally heavy brown wrapping paper.

My mother accompanied him every year on his Santa flights, and I went from the time I was born until I was married. How thrilling it was to see the people living on the isolated islands running to get the packages we had dropped, finding them, and excitedly holding them up for us to see as we circled. I particularly remember flying over the local lighthouses: Boston Light, Graves Light, Deer Island Light, Minot's Light, Scituate Light, Gurnet Light, and of course Bug Light (Duxbury Pier Light).

Now things have certainly changed. With the exception of Boston Light, no New England lighthouses are manned any longer and all have been automated. Deer Island Light, near twin to Bug Light, has even been torn down and replaced with a light atop an ugly, white, fiberglass pole. Although the Coast Guard had planned a similar structure to replace our beloved Duxbury Pier Light, Don Muirhead and Project Bug Light Inc. hopefully have been able to prevent this.



Group at Halfway Rock Light outside Lews. L-r: Edward Hannula, Keeper Horace Leverett, Edward Rowe Snow, Dorothy Snow Bicknell, Robert Shillace.